QQI Review Report 2021

Inaugural Review
of Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim Education and Training Board

QQI REVIEW

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Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that providers have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI conducts external reviews of providers of further and higher education and training on a cyclical basis. QQI is currently conducting the inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards. Cyclical review is an element of the broader quality framework for ETBs composed of: statutory quality assurance guidelines; quality assurance approval; annual quality reporting; dialogue meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; validation of programmes; and, most crucially, the quality assurance system established by each ETB. The inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards runs from 2020-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the sixteen education and training boards. On conclusion of the sixteen reviews, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying system-level observations and findings.

The inaugural review evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each ETB with a particular focus on the arrangements for the governance and management of quality; teaching, learning and assessment; and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. These are considered in the context of the expectations set out in the relevant QQI statutory quality assurance guidelines and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures.

The review methodology is based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to review:

- a self-evaluation conducted by the provider, resulting in the production of a self-evaluation report;
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers (due to the government's restrictions due to COVID-19, the review team completed a virtual visit);
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This inaugural virtual review of Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference at Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team.

The Review Team

Each inaugural review is carried out by a team of independent experts and peers. The 2021 inaugural review of Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team attended a briefing and training session conducted by QQI on 29 March 2021 and the virtual planning visit to Mayo Sligo & Leitrim Education and Training Board took place on 1st April 2021. The main review visit was conducted by the full team between 10th May and 14th May 2021 using Microsoft Teams.

Chair

For over 20 years, Geert Nanne Bruining has worked in the Dutch, English and Irish vocational educational systems as a teacher, internal verifier, Programme Leader/Quality Nominee BTEC (International Business Studies) and project manager 'Hotspot Cork' at Noorderpoort, Groningen, a vocational educational organisation in the north of the Netherlands. Currently, Geert works as teacher / internal verifier / programme leader of BTEC (International Business Studies) at Noorderpoort.

He has an Educational Bachelor's degree in General Economics, Business Economics and History and recently received his Educational Master's degree in Learning and Innovation. Geert Nanne's thesis was on international cooperation in vocational education and was partially completed while living in Cork for a year. In Cork, he established durable relationships with educational and business partners. Thanks to these relationships, Noorderpoort was able to help the City of Groningen become the first Dutch City in the Unesco Network of Learning Cities in 2018.

Coordinating Reviewer

David Muldoon has worked in vocational services for people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups for over 30 years. He has managed disability training, education and employment access services for 17 years and was Head of Quality & Accreditation for Rehab Group for 10 years holding national responsibility for developing and monitoring quality systems.

David has represented Rehab Group on organisations and service development groups at national and European levels. He is a qualified assessor for the EFQM excellence model and for EQUASS and has lectured on the Masters in Rehabilitation programme in UCD.

David holds a B Comm degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Vocational & Vocational Rehabilitation from UCD and a master's degree in Education (Training & Development) from University of Sheffield.

Learner Representative

Áine Leonard currently lives in Galway City, studying Commerce (Global Experience) in the National University of Ireland Galway. She completed the QQI Level 6 Business Management Course in Castle Buildings, Tullamore provided by the Laois and Offaly ETB in May of 2020. She chose this course to enter the field of business and see if it suited her skills and strengths. She found the course to be extremely beneficial as the skills and information she acquired proved to be valuable in both her academic and everyday life.

Peer Expert

Maria Emília Galvão is an education and training consultant with a decade of experience working in quality assurance and improvement in vocational education and training. She was a consultant for the EQAVET Secretariat and, in that capacity, she acted as an expert in support of the implementation of the EQAVET Recommendation (2008-2019) at European level.

She also assisted:

a) Portuguese institutions, i.e. ANQEP – the National Agency for Qualifications and Professional Training (2014-2016) and ANESPO – the National Association of Professional Schools (2018) in aligning their existing quality approaches in VET to the EQAVET Framework;

b) EFT by acting as rapporteur for the second annual meeting of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training, Turin, Italy (2018);

c) 3s Unternehmensberatung GmbH in providing services relating to the Cedefop study 'Quality assurance of certification in vocational education and training' (2013).

Prior to joining the EQAVET Secretariat, Maria Emília Galvão was Director General for European Affairs and International Relations in the Portuguese Ministry of Education. Previously, she held different educational positions, including teaching at secondary and polytechnic levels, curriculum development and teacher training.

Maria Emília Galvão graduated from Universidade Clássica (Lisboa) in Germanic Philology and earned a master's degree in Education from Universidade Nova (Lisboa).

Peer Expert

Trevor Moore is the acting Director of Further Education & Training at Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board. He is an accomplished manager in the education sector with experience of driving performance and specialises in linking further education provision with employer needs.

Prior to his current role, Trevor was Business Relations Manager with Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board for several years and general manager of the North Wall Community Training Centre, a FÁS Community Training Centre providing training opportunities to early school leavers, for 9 years. He was Access Officer in DCU for 2 years where he co-ordinated a range of programmes to support Access students (those from under-represented backgrounds) during their studies.

Trevor was elected to the position of Chair by members of the National Adult Literacy Agency Board and performed this role for 6 years. Trevor has also lectured in aspects of management such as: Leadership, Change Management, Strategic Management and Corporate Governance.

Industry Representative

Nikki McGoohan's professional background has involved working with a varied range of SMEs. For over 14 years, as a partner in ProTemp, she provided a range of business services including financial & general administration, mentoring business owners and assisting them in their dealings with employees, and financial institutions including banks and accountancy firms. Prior to this Nikki worked in areas such as banking, insurance and with a start-up nanotechnology company.

One of Nikki's clients in ProTemp offered a partnership position on their growing management team and for the next six years Nikki was part of a Senior Management Team in a Manufacturing Company as their HR Director along with responsibility for Health & Safety. In July last year Nikki started her own business, Propel 2Gether, which offers mentoring, coaching and training services.

Section

1

Introduction and Context

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) was established as a result of a major national re-organisation of further education and training (FET) structures. This involved the disbandment of the then national training and employment authority, FÁS, and the 33 vocational and education committees (VECs). The Education and Training Boards Act (2013) established SOLAS as the new funding, co-ordinating and monitoring authority and assigned responsibility for delivering FET services to sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs). This led to the replacement of the VECs in Counties Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim by MSLETB. The services previously provided by FÁS/SOLAS in the three counties, including the training centres in Sligo and Ballina, were transferred to the ETB in 2014. In taking over the wide range of services previously provided by FÁS and the VECs, the ETB also inherited multiple quality assurance (QA) systems and practices relating to these services.

MSLETB covers the largest geographical area of all the ETBs in Ireland and is the only ETB to encompass three counties. It covers a total area of 9,011 km2 and caters for a population of 228,176 (CSO, 2016). The population breakdown over the three counties is illustrated in the SER (p. 14) and that diagram is replicated below.

County populations

MAYO — 130,597

SLIGO — 65,535

LEITRIM — 32,044

Total 228,086
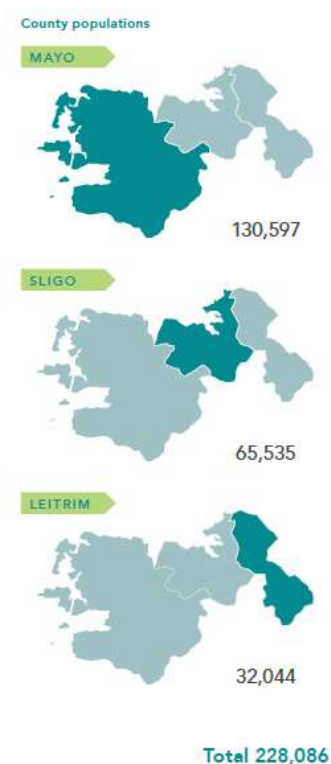
MSLETB provides services to over 30,000 learners through over 1,600 full-time and part-time courses and 17 post-primary schools. MSLETB operates 32 QQI-registered centres across its area, providing further education, training and associated services. Its services include Youthreach programmes,

Back to Education initiatives, adult literacy and programmes under the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). Programmes offered are summarised visually in the SER (p. 25) and the diagram is reproduced below.

As well as direct provision, MSLETB contracts with second providers, under an annual budget bid process. These providers include community training centres (CTCs), local training initiatives (LTIs) and specialist training providers (STPs) providing services to people with disabilities and additional needs.

Statement of Strategy 2018-2022

MSLETB documented its mission, vision, values and goals in its Strategy Statement 2018-2022. It is apparent from the SER and responses to the review team that the Chief Executive (CE) and the Executive Management Team (EMT) place a significant emphasis on QA as a central element of their strategic direction.

The vision of MSLETB as defined in its Strategy Statement is:

"to be a dynamic Education and Training Board providing a positive experience for all its learners in a professional, caring and collaborative education and training environment."

The mission of MSLETB is:

"to provide those in our communities with opportunities for life and living."

The organisation's values were defined in the strategy statement as follows:

• Quality

• Professionalism

• Proactivity

• Collaboration

It is clear to the review team from MSLETB's self-evaluation report (SER) and its engagement with the review team throughout the process that these values are central to how MSLETB conducts its business and that they influence all levels of the organisation. This was especially evident from the engagement of senior management with the review team. Senior management has placed a major focus on the development and implementation of QA structures and systems and this process is ongoing. MSETB management emphasised to the review team its commitment to being professional in delivering its services, especially in its dealings with learners, staff and external stakeholders. An example of this commitment is the emphasis placed on professional development (PD) of staff. MSLETB collaborates extensively with other statutory and non-statutory bodies to enhance opportunities for its learners and places a strong emphasis on internal communications. Finally, the organisation has demonstrated its ability to be proactive in responding to emerging needs and circumstances through the development of new programmes and services and the enhancement of its technology-enhanced learning (TEL) capacity.

In line with the mission, vision and values, MSLETB's strategy statement sets out six high-level strategic goals as follows:

• Enhance skills for the economy

• Prioritise active inclusion

• Provide the highest quality provision

• Prioritise outcomes-based planning and funding

• Increase the standing of FET

• Implement technology-enhanced learning across all provision

The first two strategic goals reflect MSLETB's role in providing the skills required for economic development and in promoting economic and social participation in its geographical area. These goals are also reflected in the organisation's mission. The third goal recognises the essential function of quality enhancement in providing the ETB's services. The fourth goal acknowledges that MSLETB must demonstrate value for public funding, while the fifth reflects that MSLETB operates in the context

of current national consideration about the status of further education and training (FET). Finally, MSLETB has recognised the need to incorporate technology-enhanced learning (TEL) across its service provision. The SER references the considerable Investment undertaken by the ETB to achieve this goal. Management and staff emphasised during the review visit that this investment was vital to the ETB's ability to respond effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Relevant Contextual Factors

As a publicly-funded body, MSLETB is governed by policy that was developed and implemented by the Department of Education and Science (DES). In recent years, MSLETB's provision of FET services has been influenced by the following contextual developments:

•	Formation of a new Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) with new ministers to oversee a more cohesive approach to the sector.

•	Development by SOLAS of the national FET strategy: Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020-2024.

•	FET Services Plans 2020 and 2021.

•	Development and implementation of a Strategic Performance Agreement (SPA) between MSLETB and SOLAS.

•	The most significant contextual factor affecting MSLETB's operations at the time of the review was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This required the ETB to suspend centre-based activities in 2020 and to switch its teaching and assessment activities to online provision.

MSLETB's Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

MSLETB has been working since its inception to rationalise the various quality and standards systems formerly operated by each VEC and FÁS/SOLAS training centre and to develop a single, integrated QA system covering all its locations and services. The organisation has made considerable efforts to embed a "quality culture" under the leadership of the Director of FET. It has been guided in these developments by the QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines, QQI Sector-specific Statutory QA Guidelines for the ETBs, and topic-specific guidelines relating to the provision of apprenticeship and blended learning programmes. The ETB's QA system addresses each of the eleven areas identified in the Core QA Guidelines. Other influences on QA development include EQAVET guidelines and standard requirements of other certification bodies such as City & Guilds, CIBTAC and CIDESCO.

Annual Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs), linked to the goals set out in the SPA, have been developed and these are reviewed annually with QQI. QA policies and procedures relating to FET

provision were formally approved through re-engagement with QQI in 2018. This process marked the beginning of comprehensive self-evaluation and reporting on QA aspects of FET provision within the ETB. MSLETB established its current QA governance structure in 2019 assigning responsibility to the Quality Council for oversight of all aspects of FET quality assurance.

Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

During the main review visit, the review team heard that the CE and EMT committed to the inaugural review process as an opportunity to reflect on the ETB's progress in relation to QA and to identify areas for further development. MSLETB established an External Review Management Group, a Self-evaluation Steering Group and appointed a Review Co-ordinator to oversee development of the Self-evaluation Report (SER). The External Review Management Group developed an action plan and presented this to the Self-evaluation Steering Group for implementation.

The Quality Council sought and approved nominations for the Self-evaluation Steering Group. The group comprised 23 members recruited from across the organisation and was chaired by an Area Training Manager. The group's work was facilitated by the Review Co-ordinator. The self-evaluation process was communicated widely across the organisation through newsletter articles, posters and inclusion in staff meetings.

Four sub-groups were established to carry out consultation with stakeholders, which took the form of:

• Centre-based Self-evaluation

• Individual Staff Survey

• AONTAS Virtual Learning Forum

• Employer Survey

Consultation activities commenced in March 2020 and included surveys and focus groups with staff, learners, employers and other external partners. All QQI-registered centres were invited to take part in focus groups and 21 such meetings took place. All FET staff members were asked to participate in a survey giving feedback on the effectiveness of MSLETB's QA systems. The ETB engaged the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation, AONTAS, to obtain feedback from learners on programmes and services. Surveys on MSLETB services were designed to be carried out with 15 employers and 25 other external stakeholders.

Consultation activities started in March 2020 but were quickly interrupted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which necessitated moving these activities online. Consultation with learners was conducted through three virtual learner fora and an online survey. MSLETB management acknowledged during the main review visit that the lack of face-to-face contact limited the level of responses, particularly from employers and other external stakeholders. The SER was completed and submitted to QQI in February 2021. The report includes a detailed description of the self-evaluation process and the structure established to develop the report. A report summary was developed and made available to learners.

The SER is comprehensive and structured clearly under the three QA objectives:

- Governance and Management of Quality

- Teaching, Learning & Assessment

- Programme Monitoring and Review

The report addresses each subsection under the three objectives using the following format:

1. Description: Outline of the arrangements relating to that subsection

2. Evaluation: Examination of the effectiveness of these arrangements

3. Conclusion: Identification of good practice and potential improvements

The SER includes appendices and URL links to further information. The identification of opportunities for future development within the conclusions demonstrates the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement and was helpful to the review team in developing its recommendations. The review team wishes to recognise MSLETB's commitment to developing a very comprehensive SER during a period when working life was disrupted by Covid-19, making consultation with external stakeholders especially difficult. In addition, the review team recognises the ETB's commitment to quality improvement through identifying effective practice, challenges and potential future enhancement in each subsection of the report. This commitment is also evident from MSLETB's decision to maintain the steering group with some membership changes to oversee implementation of the recommendations identified in the report. The review team believes that this development will allow the ETB to prioritise QA actions that are critical to its service provision and to establish reasonable timelines for completion. These actions may be incorporated into the action plan addressing the recommendations in this review report.

Section

3

Quality Assurance &
Enhancement

Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

ETB Mission & Strategy

It was apparent to the review team from the documentation submitted and from its meetings with staff members and learners that MSLETB regards QA development as a central element in achieving its mission and strategic goals The ETB has made noteworthy progress towards developing a professional and quality-focused culture across the organisation. It was evident, too, that staff are aware of the organisation's strategic direction and of the role of QA in achieving its goals.

MSLETB's mission – i.e. to provide opportunities for life and living – is reflected in its innovative approach to developing new programmes and services to meet emerging needs and in its focus on the individual learner. It has shown a proactive approach to innovation, continuous improvement and learning within the organisation. Examples of new programmes include three new agriculture programmes developed with other ETBs and apprenticeship programmes in sales and craft butchery, developed in collaboration with SOLAS and employer representatives. Developments in technology - enhanced learning (TEL) and professional development (PD) demonstrate progress towards achieving goals related to these areas.

The organisation's emphasis on responding to learner needs is apparent from the range of courses and support services that it provides across a wide range of subject areas. Programmes provided include accredited and non-accredited courses. Non-accredited courses include adult literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and personal development programmes. MSLETB supports learners to improve all aspects of their lives as well as providing opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge. Front-line staff reported during the main review visit that their job satisfaction arises mainly from seeing learners develop and progress. Benefits reported by learners included advances in relation to their own personal and social development as well as acquisition of skills and qualifications.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on its clear focus on the learner as the centre of its services in line with its mission. This was demonstrated repeatedly through responses from management, staff members, current and past learners and other stakeholders.

The review team commends MSLETB on its continued commitment to enhancing opportunities for participants through developing new programmes and services and through its emphasis on improving the quality of its services.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that MSLETB use the experience gained through developing the SER to strengthen further its engagement with external stakeholders. This will further enhance its capacity to identify emerging needs and to develop services to address them.

Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance

MSLETB established comprehensive structures for the governance and management of quality assurance in the organisation in 2019. The governance structure is designed to meet the obligations of QQI's Core QA Guidelines and to facilitate the ETB's ambition to establish a quality culture throughout the organisation. The structure includes the Quality Council, which has an overarching role in quality development and assurance, and working groups on key aspects of QA including:

•   The Quality Assurance Working Group focusing on development of policies and procedures

•   The Programme Approval Committee (PAC).

•   The Professional Development (PD) Advisory Group

•   The Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) Advisory Group

Each group has developed terms of reference defining its role and responsibility. It was clear from the review team's interaction with management and staff members that the Quality Council and working groups focus on supporting staff on QA-related matters in addition to ensuring compliance. Staff members reported that they regard the QA structures as being supportive and providing valuable resources to them in carrying out their roles.

MSLETB has set out to develop a harmonised QA system for its FET provision as an integral part of its strategic direction and to establish a quality culture throughout the organisation. Progress in this area is demonstrated in the SER and supporting material as well as in responses from members of staff during the main review visit. The effectiveness of MSLETB's QA approaches is demonstrated by the obvious commitment to QA among staff members across the ETB and by the effectiveness of the ETB's response to overcome the challenges posed by Covid-19. Evidence provided to the review team shows that significant harmonisation of legacy QA-related policies and procedures has been achieved, but the ETB acknowledged to the review team that this work is ongoing and remains to be completed. A vital element in achieving further progress is the development of a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual, documenting a single, integrated and harmonised QA system for the ETB's FET programmes. The review team was informed that work is proceeding on this and the contents of the proposed manual, referencing the Core QA Guidelines issued by QQI, were made

available to the review team during the review. A timeline for completion of the manual was not made available at the time of the review visit.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on the ongoing transformation in its QA governance structures and systems and in relation to the vital role of QA in the ETB's strategic direction.

The review team commends the ETB on its continuing efforts to create a single, integrated and harmonised QA system for its FET provision and to embed a quality culture throughout the organisation.

Recommendation

Efforts to harmonise the ETB's structure, strategy and planning are well underway, especially relating to QA systems and TEL. Other areas are still in an early stage of development. The review team recommends that MSLETB continue the development of integrated QA practices across all services.

The review team recommends that MSLETB complete development of the QA Manual including integrated QA policies and procedures across its services. This should become the primary resource for staff members on all QA requirements.

Documentation of Quality Assurance

MSLETB has committed significant resources to harmonising QA policies and procedures across its FET services and, as noted above, this process is ongoing. Completion of the Quality Manual will be a major step forward in this process. The QA Working Group is responsible for developing, monitoring, and reviewing QA policies and procedures under its terms of reference. The impact of Covid-19 on the ETB's services required development of new policies, procedures and guidelines relating to TEL, learner assessment and work placement. During the main review visit, staff members demonstrated awareness of QA-related documentation and this awareness was also apparent from staff surveys. Staff members expressed their appreciation of the prompt development and implementation of the new procedures arising from Covid-19.

Documentation in respect of QA policies and procedures is available on the SCORE intranet. This internal repository acts as the main source of information relating to QA for all MSLETB staff. Documentation relating to FET programmes and their component modules are also stored on the SCORE site. During the review visit, staff members reported that they view the SCORE site as a valuable resource for policies and procedures relating to their roles. However, they also stated that the site could be made more user-friendly, especially in relation to accessing assessment documentation.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on establishing its QA Working Group as a central entity with clearly defined responsibility for developing, storing and disseminating QA policies, procedures and associated documents.

The review team commends the ETB on the significant level of awareness of QA policies and procedures among the organisation's staff and on the numerous sources of information on policies and procedures available to staff and their accessibility.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that the ETB continually review and develop its QA documentation systems to ensure that QA policies, procedures and associated materials are readily available and accessible to all staff requiring such information.

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

As a publicly funded body, MSLETB is governed by public sector regulations relating to recruitment. The organisation's recruitment and selection processes are illustrated in the SER (p. 37).

Staff members are notified by email from the HR department of all staff vacancies and, during the main review visit, staff members confirmed their awareness of vacancies as they arise. Staff members also indicated that they regard the recruitment process as being fair and equitable, but that it could be quicker. It was reported that it can take four to five months to complete an individual hiring and the review team was advised during the review visit that there are currently delays in filling new and vacant posts due to the time taken in obtaining approval from relevant parties. Applicants are asked to complete a standard application form and do not have the option of submitting a CV. There is a standardised interview system and training is provided to interview panel members. The review team heard that the ETB plans to develop a more streamlined recruitment process using eRecruitment. ETB management expects that this new process will allow information collected from candidates to be transferred to the CORE payroll system, speeding up the process and reducing errors.

Staff members reported during the review visit that they are supported by a structured induction process, but it was noted by management that the induction process relating to part-time staff can vary across locations and needs to be reviewed. There is a standard probationary period of one year, but there is no formal appraisal process in place. The review team acknowledges that the ETB may be constrained by national and sectoral agreements in relation to staff appraisal.

The organisation demonstrates a strong commitment to the ongoing professional development (PD) of its staff. Staff members can avail of programmes delivered internally and can also apply for funding to pursue relevant external courses. MSLETB appointed a PD Co-ordinator in 2020 to develop a more coherent structure for the function. The review team heard from management and staff that there has been a major increase in PD activity recently. This has been influenced by the impact of Covid-19 and the need to upskill staff on TEL, and indeed staff PD records submitted alongside the SER show a strong emphasis on technology-related training.

Other notable developments in PD include participation by 22 MSLETB staff in an NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Certificate in Programme Design and Validation for Further Education and Training in Maynooth University, illustrating the organisation's willingness to invest in critical skills acquisition. Teaching staff have also attended training by the Association for Higher Education, Access & Disability (AHEAD) on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Staff responses indicated that MSLETB is reactive to PD needs communicated by staff members, but that there is no formal needs analysis system in place. Participation in PD by staff members is not linked currently to staff progression. Teaching staff indicated that they would welcome further development of communities of practice (COPs), which already operate for specialised IT programmes, to support their ongoing learning. This was especially the case for teachers/tutors/instructors operating in isolated settings, including island locations. These may incorporate similar programmes offered by other providers and some COP activities can be carried out online to minimise time and travel requirements

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on responding rapidly to the Covid-19 crisis by providing training in TEL to significant numbers of teaching staff. This has enabled the move to online delivery of programmes and assessment of learner achievement.

The review team commends the ETB on funding staff members to attend the Maynooth programme on Programme Design and Validation. This supports the organisation's goal to enhance learning opportunities through new programmes.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that MSLETB streamline its human resources approaches by defining the skills and knowledge required to realise its strategy and QA objectives and by establishing a

training needs analysis system to ensure that access to PD activities is based on identified needs and that PD can be linked with staff progression.

The review team recommends setting up additional communities of practice (COPs) to support staff and promote peer learning.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

MSLETB develops new programmes and updates existing programmes continually to respond to changing learner and labour market needs. Applications to develop new programmes and update existing programmes are submitted to the Programme Approval Committee (PAC). The application process is illustrated in the SER (p. 43).
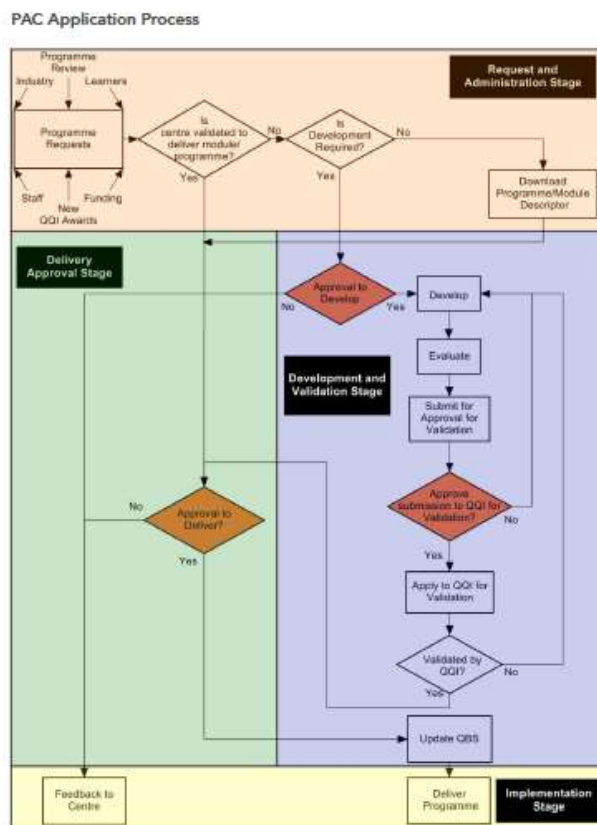
Outcomes from PAC meetings are communicated through the SCORE intranet site and a quarterly QA newsletter.

There is a clear process for new programme development, which is set out in the SER. Reviews of existing programmes are carried out on a needs basis but there is no system for periodic review of all programmes to ensure continued relevance. Staff members acknowledged during the review visit that updating current programmes to meet the needs of learners and employers requires a more

structured approach. During the review visit, teachers/tutors/instructors stated that programme development and revision is a time-consuming process, particularly as it requires consultation with learners and external stakeholders. It may be possible to address the time demands on staff members by collaborating with other providers on programme development.

When proposed programmes are developed, they are submitted to QQI or other certification bodies for validation. Staff members reported that the internal application process to the PAC is clear and effective but that the validation process with certifying bodies can take several months. Participation by MSLETB staff in the Maynooth University Programme Design Postgraduate Certificate is a significant step in enhancing the organisation's capacity in programme development.

There is considerable scope for collaboration with external bodies in developing new programmes. The ETB provided case studies describing the development of new agriculture programmes, its new apprenticeship programmes in Sales and Craft Butchery and a Digital Assisted Eco-Driving programme in partnership with other ETBs and industry representatives.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on its development and implementation of a structured and effective programme application and review process through the PAC.

The review team commends MSLETB's development of new programmes to meet labour market needs in partnership with external stakeholders. The Agriculture, Sales and Butchery Apprenticeships and Eco-Driving programmes provide examples of effective collaboration that can inform future developments.

Recommendation

The review team recommends development of a systematic programme review process

Access, Transfer and Progression

MSLETB's processes address all elements of the QQI Policy and Criteria on Access, Transfer and Progression. The ETB provides information on courses to prospective learners and stakeholders through its website and advertising on local radio, regional newspapers and social media. It has engaged a public relations company to advise and assist it in this. There was some indication during the review visit during the review team's discussions with learners that advertising of courses is not uniform throughout the area and some learners reported that they heard about courses by word of mouth or "by chance". The ETB has set up and publicised through the website a freephone number to support information provision to potential learners.

Applicants can now register their interest in programmes online and the review team was informed during the main review visit that this has improved efficiency. However, the team also heard that admissions are managed at centre level and there is no common admissions process across the

organisation. MSLETB's Adult Guidance Information Officers provide guidance to new learners on their options and the supports available to them. MSLETB does not operate a standard initial assessment process to identify learner needs and this was identified as an area for development in the SER. Applicants who do not meet the entry criteria for courses they apply for are offered alternatives. Each new learner is assigned a co-ordinator or other staff member as a single point of contact. Individual centres provide a learner information pack to new entrants, but a standardised learner induction pack is not yet available. It was reported to the review team by staff members engaged in learner induction that career guidance needs to be more uniform across locations and that this should begin at induction.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an issue for MSLETB as it is for many other providers. There is a system in place to provide exemptions where learners have already completed component modules. Life experience may be considered where an applicant does not meet programme entry requirements, but MSLETB is unable to certify prior learning. It is accepted that RPL in FET is a national issue and cannot be addressed by MSLETB alone but there is scope to develop more formal RPL arrangements through collaboration with other providers.

Learners are facilitated to progress to other programmes at the same level or at a higher level subject to programme entry requirements. Some past learners reported to the review team that they would welcome information from the ETB on further training opportunities available to them to enable them to progress to a higher level of qualifications.

MSLETB management expressed concern about the rate of progression of students from the ETB's schools to FET programmes. The review team heard that, currently, FET management and guidance counsellors provide information on FET opportunities to students through school visits and liaison with school principals and teachers. A transition programme to facilitate learners progressing from the ETB's schools to FET programmes is at an early stage of development.

MSLETB has developed formal and informal relationships with higher education (HE) providers to facilitate its graduates' progression to programmes provided by those institutions. Relationships with local providers are governed by memoranda of understanding (MOUs). These HE providers include Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), IT Sligo and St Angela's, a linked provider of NUI Galway specialising in healthcare programmes. During the main review visit, representatives of these providers noted that the ETB promotes its learners with them regularly through college visits and online presentations. HE representatives were generally positive about the level of communication and information provided to them by the ETB. It was clear to the review team from these discussions that applications from FET graduates are welcomed by HE institutions, as these learners tend to be well prepared for HE and generally achieve successful outcomes.

Staff members reported that there can be barriers to FET learners progressing to higher education due to the entry requirements of individual HE providers. ETB and HE staff are collaborating to develop clearer pathways for FET learners to HE. These include the mapping of FET course modules

to ensure compatibility with HE entry requirements and the development of pathways to enable FET graduates to access the second year of some HE programmes.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on its provision of information on its programmes and services to potential participants through a wide range of media and further commends MSLETB on the continued enhancement of its information provision.

The review team commends MSLETB on its development of structures and its assignment of specific staff to facilitate access to programmes for new entrants.

The review team commends MSLETB on the linkages it has developed with higher education providers and the formalisation of these relationships in MOUs.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that MSLETB develop a standard initial assessment system to identify learner needs and the supports required. This system could be developed and piloted in partnership with other providers.

The review team recommends that MSLETB build on existing agreements with higher education providers and continue to develop clearer progression pathways. In doing so, the review team recommends that the ETB further develop its Transition Programme for learners exiting school and progressing to FET programmes.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

MSLETB has committed to integrating and harmonising assessment-related policies and procedures across its services and locations. Management acknowledged during the main review visit that considerable progress has been made in relation to this task, but that it is not yet complete. The organisation operates an assessment of learner results system in compliance with QQI requirements and award standards to ensure fair and consistent assessment of learner performance and the integrity of results awarded. Processes are available on the SCORE intranet site and include the following elements:

1.   Internal verification (IV) managed at centre level to confirm completeness and accuracy of the assessment process.

2.   External authentication (EA) provides independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment in line with award standards.

3.   Results approval panels (RAP) consider IV and EA reports and recommend provisional results.

The QA Unit has integrated the IV, EA and RAP processes under its management. The unit appoints EAs and schedules RAP meetings, which are attended by ETB representatives across several centres. The EA issues a report on findings and recommendations. These are considered at RAP meetings and are used by centres as a resource for service improvement. Following an assessment round, the QA Unit prepares a consolidated RAP report for submission to the Quality Council, identifying areas of good practice, non-compliance and risk.

Feedback from staff members during the main review visit indicated satisfaction with the information provided to them on their roles and responsibilities relating to learner assessment. Staff also expressed satisfaction with the reliability of the processes in place to confirm the accuracy of assessment results.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on its integration of IV, EA, RAP and assessment appeals procedures under the management of the QA Unit and further commends the ETB on the quality of the assessment-related information provided to staff members.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that the work of integrating and harmonising assessment-related policies and procedures across its services and locations be completed and resulting policies and procedures included in the proposed Quality Manual.

The review team recommends that MSLETB share the insights and recommendations of EA reports across centres to enhance QA-related learning. This would enable heads of centres and teachers/tutors/instructors to benefit from good practice and areas for improvement identified in other locations and contribute to harmonising practice.

Information and Data Management

Secure and reliable data is essential to the effective delivery of MSLETB's services. Development of the ETB's services and the integration of its QA systems require effective information and data management systems to record and disseminate information and to allow for analysis of data.

MSLETB uses a range of IT systems to store and disseminate data, some hosted centrally and others at centre level. These include:

• Programme Learning Support System (PLSS) which is a key component of MSLETB's Management Information System (MIS). It stores and processes learner records, performance and outcomes as well as information on courses. The system is hosted centrally by SOLAS.

• Certification Data System which stores certification data at centre level.

• QQI Business System (QBS) which provide reports on individual learner achievement.

• The Walled Garden (City & Guilds administration system) which provides a variety of reports to support data validation, QA, monitoring and review as well as development in centres.

• SUN System which records and manages financial data.

• CORE Payroll system

MSLETB is represented on the national PLSS advisory group. PLSS is an essential tool in managing records relating to FET provision and its enhancement is a priority for SOLAS. It has been proposed that PLSS data will be used as a basis for awarding public funding in the future.

MSLETB is developing a new client relationship management (CRM) system in partnership with four other ETBs for use in the sector. It will be used initially to capture and manage employer data to enhance employer engagement.

The review team's discussions with MSLETB management showed its awareness of the role of data collection in supporting strategic planning and evaluation. Ongoing development of MSLETB's systems for collection, storage and management of data provides opportunities for the organisation to effectively measure achievement of its strategic objectives and to enhance future planning. Effective data systems allow the ETB to develop meaningful KPIs related to learner achievement, to evaluate results and to identify trends.

As the ETB gathers and stores substantial personal data relating to learners and staff members, it is subject to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). A Data Protection Unit supports services on data protection requirements. All staff members are required to complete online GDPR training and a Data Protection Manual is an ongoing resource for staff. A new GDPR training tool is in development. Learners are advised of their rights under GDPR on registering for a programme. The review team's interactions with staff members showed strong awareness of GDPR requirements and

responsibilities. This was also apparent from staff surveys, the results of which were shared with the review team.

Commendation

The review team commends MSLETB on the level of staff awareness of requirements and responsibilities related to GDPR. This is evident from staff surveys referenced in the SER and in responses to the review team.

Recommendations

The review team recommends the establishment of meaningful KPIs for all services and using the qualitative and quantitative data available to effectively measure and analyse performance.

The review team recommends that MSLETB:

• Continue to review and update its management information systems to streamline data collection and processing across the organisation.

• Develop an overarching policy and procedures on the collection and use of data as part of a new, harmonised QA system and describe these in the Quality Manual.

• Explore effective ways of using data to inform FET provision, monitoring and evaluation.

Public Information and Communication

MSLETB needs to inform the public of its services and associated activities continually to maintain its prominent position in relation to regional economic and social development. It uses a range of communications channels to provide information on its programmes and services to stakeholders, potential learners and the public. These include its website, local radio, newspapers, billboards, social media, marketing materials, open days and school visits. Content includes information in respect of MSLETB's QA approaches. MSLETB provides information in respect of its non-accredited programmes as well as those leading to recognised awards. The MSLETB website was updated in 2020 to make it more effective and user-friendly. Results of a learner survey included in the SER showed a satisfaction level with the website of over 80%. Some FET centres operate their own websites, which link to the main MSLETB site. Plans to carry out a review of all linked websites to ensure compatibility across locations are noted in the SER.

The MSLETB PR and Marketing Group supports communication and marketing activities within the organisation's strategic framework. The group supports many corporate and centre-based events annually. It also manages the ETB's social media accounts, monitors social media interactions and effective communication and information provision to MSLETB staff. It is noted in the SER that the

appointment of a communications officer is being considered to further streamline public relations and marketing activities.

The creation of the freephone number for prospective learners is a further enhancement of communications. Learner representatives reported that information on courses was communicated effectively in general, and that all their questions were answered promptly.

Commendation

The review team commends MSTETB on the variety and quality of its communication channels and particularly on its very comprehensive website.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that MSLETB carry out its intended review of all linked websites to consider their viability and redesign and appoint a communications officer to streamline current communication activities.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Learning Environment

The review team acknowledges that it was necessary to carry out the review entirely through Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions. As a result, the review team had no opportunity to view teaching and service facilities and to experience the learning environment at first hand.

MSLETB has a programme of building development and upgrading in place, subject to availability of capital funding. A comprehensive list of planned developments and building projects currently in progress is included in the SER. These include extensive developments of buildings and facilities to enhance the physical learning environment. Learner survey results included in the SER show general learner satisfaction with physical facilities.

MSLETB has invested significantly in its ICT infrastructure in line with its Strategy Statement 2018. Developments include updating and replacing IT hardware and the introduction of Microsoft Teams and Moodle as teaching aids. The learning environment at MSLETB facilities was changed fundamentally by the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020, which made face-to-face learning impossible for a period. MSLETB's investment in its IT infrastructure allowed it to respond rapidly to the new situation by providing TEL opportunities for its learners. It was necessary to adjust methods of assessment by moving from examinations and skills demonstrations to assignments. Many learners were unable to participate in work experience, a core component of FET programmes. This was replaced by work-related assignments.

A case study included in the SER describes the establishment of a TEL Advisory Group, the development of a TEL strategy and the appointment of a TEL co-ordinator in 2020 to respond to the new significant role of TEL in service delivery. The review team's interaction with teaching staff and learners provided evidence that the move to online learning was welcomed by some learners, especially those in more remote areas, as the necessity for travel was removed. Staff members reported that other learners were unable to cope with the new situation and dropped out of courses. As conditions allow a return to centre-based learning, MSLETB will need to consider its programme delivery models in a post-Covid world; these considerations should have regard to where learners are located, the benefits of social interaction and any practical/theoretical elements of courses.

A key feature of MSLETB's learning environment is the emphasis on communication between staff members and between staff and learners, carried out through email and telephone. Staff and students reported to the review team during the review visit that this level of communication has been maintained and even enhanced through the Covid-19 period using Microsoft Teams. During the review team's meetings with learners, they expressed repeatedly their appreciation for the level of communication and informal support provided to them by teachers/tutors/instructors. Staff members reported that they have extensive opportunities to raise issues and concerns with management and ETB support functions and confirmed to the team that their concerns are listened to. They also stated that the level of interaction that they have with colleagues has not only continued but has even

improved as meetings are online and do not require travel. Travel time is a major factor due to the large geographical area covered by the ETB and the use of online communication will need to be considered post-Covid.

Learner communications within the ETB are also facilitated by learner representative structures including the Learner Council and representative committees. These structures provide a channel for learner issues to be raised with management and resolutions found. Learner representatives expressed their satisfaction with these arrangements, stating that they allow learners to raise issues of concern with management and that issues are responded to promptly.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on its continued development of physical and ICT infrastructure to enhance the learner experience. The review team notes that MSLETB's development of its ICT capacity since 2018 has enabled the ETB to respond rapidly and effectively to the conditions imposed by Covid-19.

The review team commends MSLETB on its effective formal and informal communication channels to capture the learner voice, tutor feedback and stakeholder input.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that MSLETB develop an integrated strategy and action plan for service delivery post-Covid. The strategy should define the future role of centre-based, online, and blended learning methodologies, taking account of learner needs and circumstances.

Assessment of Learners

MSLETB has a range of procedures in place to ensure fair and consistent assessment of learners. FET centres develop assessment plans annually in accordance with key certification dates issued by QQI and other certifying bodies. Course assessment requirements are communicated to learners at induction. Individual assessment details are included in assessment briefs and communicated to learners in advance of assessment events. These include award criteria, marking schemes and deadlines.
Staff members devise assessment instruments and associated marking schemes. Learners are marked according to their achievement of defined learning outcomes and against specific criteria. Assessments are adapted to cater for the needs of individual learners under the reasonable accommodation principle. Examples of reasonable accommodations include use of scribes/readers, provision of additional time to complete assessments, use of sign language interpreters and provision of adaptive equipment/technology.

FET centres use a system of locally developed assessment with teachers/tutors/instructors responsible for devising assessment instruments and associated marking schemes/rubrics. Training centres use standardised Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) that include guidelines, marking schemes and other supporting documentation. These AIS are maintained at ETB level and made available to teachers/tutors/instructors as required. In their meetings with the review team, teachers/tutors/instructors showed a significant level of awareness and knowledge of assessment requirements.

Assessment methods used by FET centres include the following:

- Assignments with defined submission dates outlined in the assessment brief.
- Skills demonstrations whereby learners perform tasks under defined conditions.
- Examinations conducted in accordance with established procedures.

Centres have procedures in place to investigate and respond to suspected malpractice such as plagiarism or fabrication of evidence. If learners are dissatisfied with their results, they have the right to appeal either the results awarded or the assessment process. Learner appeals are managed centrally by the QA Unit. Engagement with learners by the review team indicated that these learners are aware that they can appeal but had no reason to use the appeals process.

Restrictions related to Covid-19 required MSLETB to move to assignments as the primary means of assessment. The organisation agreed alternative assessment methods with QQI, and this change was governed by a procedure on change of assessment technique. The ETB also agreed adjustments to scale back the IV and EA processes with QQI for the period of closure and procedures were developed to support this change. Feedback from learners through surveys and responses to the review team shows general satisfaction with the alternative assessment methods used.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on developing and implementing a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidelines to support fair and consistent assessment of learner achievement. It was apparent to the review team that these are well understood throughout the organisation.

The review team commends MSLETB on its effective response to Covid-19 in devising and implementing alternative assessment methods in consultation with QQI and other certification bodies.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that a structure be established to integrate assessment methods across programmes and centres, to promote efficiency and uniformity across services. Assessment requirements should be incorporated into the proposed Quality Manual.

Supports for Learners

MSLETB provides a range of supports to learners to promote successful participation and completion of courses. These include reasonable accommodations, literacy and numeracy supports and adult education guidance. The ETB has allocated specific staff to support learner participation including adult guidance counsellors, information officers, support and literacy teachers/tutors/instructors. Results of a learner survey included in the SER showed a satisfaction level of 80% with learner supports provided. The review team heard during the review visit that learners are encouraged to disclose any additional needs or disabilities on application to programmes. Where additional needs are disclosed, a staff member meets the applicant to establish the supports required and any additional funding requirements. Examples of supports which may be applied for include:

•   Personal assistants

•   Assistive technologies

•   Readers/scribes

MSLETB promotes equal and inclusive engagement in its programmes in line with its strategic goal to promote active inclusion. Recent actions to enhance inclusion include:

•   Integrating literacy and numeracy into all FET programmes.

•   Providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to support learners from other countries.

•   Providing an integrated approach to initial assessment of adult literacy learners

•   Supporting the development of new programmes by second providers specialising in specialist training provision. These providers are contracted by the ETB to deliver services to learners with disabilities and other additional needs in the form of smaller classes, specialist support staff and specialised equipment.

•   Introduction of staff training in Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

While there are many supports available to learners, it was noted in the SER that there is need for a Learner Support Unit as a "one-stop shop" for learners requiring supports. It was also noted by staff members that several wellness activities have taken place, including webinars, but that more input is required in this area. Staff members have been introduced to the UDL framework through an event facilitated by UCD and AHEAD. Adopting the UDL framework is intended to enhance delivery to a diverse range of learners.

MSLETB engaged the support of AONTAS to capture the learner voice through a series of National Learner Forum events that commenced in 2018. Through these events, learners expressed general satisfaction with the supports that the ETB has provided to them. Satisfaction with supports was also

expressed by learners through learner surveys included in the SER and in responses by learner representatives to the review team.

The review team heard that all learners received training in Microsoft Teams, but it was noted by learners that additional training in respect of basic IT skills would have been helpful at the commencement of courses. MSLETB supplied laptops to learners through a laptop loan scheme where needed to enable those learners to participate in online learning. During the review visit, learners reported that teachers/tutors/instructors have been extremely supportive throughout the past difficult year and have consistently "gone the extra mile" to support learners. For example, individual teachers/tutors/instructors accommodated learners who had poor internet connection on a needs basis by recording each class session. Teachers/tutors/instructors also provided extensions for learners unable to finish assignments on time due to constraints caused by the pandemic.

Despite the above efforts by the organisation and its staff, it was noted that some learners were unable to cope with the new learning environment and dropped out of programmes. The lack of reliable broadband in some areas has caused difficulties for learners. While this issue is outside the control of MSLETB, there may be a role for the organisation in developing digital hubs in specified locations to enable its learners to participate in online learning.

Commendation

The review team commends MSLETB management and staff members on maintaining consistently impressive levels of learner communication and support throughout the transition to online learning and assessment.

Recommendation

The review team recommends the development of a learner support unit based on UDL principles as a "one-stop shop" for learners requiring assistance. Such a unit would contribute to integrating and streamlining the inputs of existing support services.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

MSLETB is engaged in the ongoing development of its monitoring and review processes. Following re-engagement with QQI and approval of its QA policies and procedures in 2018, MSLETB commenced development of an annual quality improvement plan (QIP), which is submitted to QQI for review. The review team notes that submission of the QIP and review of the previous plan helps to maintain a focus on QA development and continuous improvement.

The inaugural review process has provided a further opportunity for MSLETB to engage in extensive self-evaluation and review at a time when MSLETB is undertaking significant development and integration of its QA systems. The organisation's CE and EMT ensured that the process provided further opportunity for improvement and development by establishing a structure and process to develop the SER. This review involved wide-ranging consultation with learners, staff members across the organisation, and with external stakeholders. Staff members reported to the review team that they were aware of the process and that their input was sought and reflected in the report. The review team is confident that this process led to a reflective and detailed report, which provided a solid basis for the next stage of the inaugural review process.

The external authentication process provides a basis for a review of the ETB's processes relating to assessment of learner achievement. Reports reflect an external view on fair and consistent assessment in validated programmes provided by MSLETB. EAs are selected from a national panel and appointed to individual centres by the QA Unit following completion of the IV process. The EAs issue reports detailing strengths and areas for improvement for the assessment process, and these are reviewed at RAP meetings. The QA Unit issues a report after every RAP meeting, documenting strengths, recommendations and any issues arising. The QA Unit prepares a report on RAP meetings for the quarterly QA newsletter and provides a report for review by the Quality Council.

Commendation

The review team commends MSLETB on its production of the SER. The organisation has used the self-evaluation process to reflect critically on the QA practices and to engage with staff throughout the organisation, as well as identifying where developments are required for continual improvement.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that MSLETB continue to develop its monitoring and review processes in the context of its strategic plans and goals.

Programme Monitoring & Review

Centres are not obliged currently to report centrally other than on matters relating to overall QA policy or to programme structure and content. It was confirmed in the SER that a centre-based evaluation process is in development, which will include site visits carried out by an external facilitator. During the review visit management confirmed that they regard such a process as a vital further step in developing the ETB's monitoring and evaluation processes.

As part of its integration programme, MSLETB has updated its validated programme descriptors, module descriptors and training specifications with the ETB's logos and branding, All FET programmes and related modules are stored on the SCORE intranet site. Teachers/tutors/instructors carry out a review with learners and record their feedback on completion of each course module. Centres can submit proposed changes to module descriptors to the QA Unit. Centres review their own programmes, using learner and staff feedback and submit proposed changes to the PAC for approval. All certified programmes are subject to the IV, EA and RAP processes, providing monitoring and reporting on assessment processes at local level.

The principal or manager of each FET centre is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the programmes that it provides. Newly validated programmes and programmes new to a centre are reviewed after the first year. MSLETB provided a sample review process for North Connaught College in the SER. The process has four steps as follows:

1.   Learner questionnaire
2.   Self-evaluation checklist
3.   Programme evaluation report
4.   Programme improvement plan

It is stated in the SER that there is a need to establish a schedule of reviews for all existing FET programmes to ensure that programmes are continually updated and remain relevant to current skills requirements. Considering the time demands of review activities reported by staff, the review process should be carried out across centres where possible, to avoid duplication of work.

Commendation

The review team commends MSLETB on its continued development of QA monitoring and review processes. Development of the proposed centre-based evaluation system will add a further level of programme monitoring.

Recommendation

The review team recommends the rollout of the proposed centre-based evaluation process, initially on a pilot basis. This process should include a self-evaluation instrument to be completed by each centre manager in consultation with learners and staff. The process should result in a centre QIP, feeding into the organisational QIP.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

MSLETB develops and manages relationships with a wide range of external organisations in delivering its services. These organisations include statutory and non-statutory bodies, other FET providers, HE providers, community organisations, local authorities and employer representatives. They include formal arrangements governed by contracts and MOUs as well as more informal relationships. The ETB also maintains close links with national stakeholders including SOLAS, QQI and other certifying and regulatory bodies.

MSLETB contracts 'second providers' to deliver specific programmes on its behalf using an annual budget bidding system. Second providers include community training centres (CTCs), local training initiatives (LTIs) and specialist training providers (STPs) for people with disabilities. These programmes may or may not offer certification. In some cases, ETB teachers/tutors/instructors deliver programmes in second provider premises. Certified programmes offered by second providers are governed by TQAS requirements and certification standards and are monitored and reviewed accordingly. Second providers indicated to the review team that, in many cases, relationships have been developed over an extended period. There is considerable formal and informal communication, and second providers feel supported by MSLETB. In more recent times, this support includes PD opportunities provided to second provider staff.

The ETB carries out quarterly monitoring reviews with second providers and these include feedback from learners. Periodic certification audits are also conducted to review application of assessment processes and to identify any issues or corrective actions required. The review team found that monitoring reviews focus on learner retention, progression and outcomes. Apart from these basic measures, there are no other KPIs used to assess second provider performance. It was noted that establishing meaningful KPIs for non-accredited programmes delivering training on personal and social skills can be challenging and will require consultation and agreement on suitable measures between the ETB and the second providers. It was also reported by second provider representatives that the level of paper-based reporting required by the ETB can be 'overwhelming.' It was stated that the information required in respect of learners can be excessive – for example, educational attainment details for adult learners who completed formal education many years ago.

MSLETB is a co-ordinating provider for New Generation Apprenticeships (Butchery and Sales) and a collaborative provider for others (Commis Chef and ICT). These programmes operate within the QQI Statutory QA Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes. The SER describes MSLETB's service level agreement with SOLAS for the governance and management of quality-assured craft apprenticeship provision in the area. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) define the ETB's support activities for employers and apprentices participating in apprenticeship programmes. Craft apprenticeship programmes are monitored annually by the SOLAS-based Quality Assurance Services (QAS) unit. Employer representatives reported excellent engagement by MSLETB in relation to traineeship and apprenticeship programmes. There has also been considerable engagement by MSLETB on customising programmes for specific employers. MSLETB's Employer Engagement Team liaises continually with employers, advising them of ETB courses available to their staff, as well as of learner achievement. The team also promotes employment and work experience opportunities among learners. It was reported by employer representatives that some employers still do not see the ETB as a solution to their staff upskilling needs and there is work to be done in this area.

Employer representatives reported that much of the overall engagement by MSLETB with employers is on an informal basis and would benefit from being systematised. MSLETB has secured funding with other ETBs under the Enterprise Ireland Innovation through Collaboration Fund to develop a CRM system. This is a database to allow more effective management of relationships with employers. The project is referred to as the Strategic Employer Development Project (SEED) and the review team regards this as a positive development in employer engagement.

Commendations

The review team commends MSLETB on developing contractual arrangements with second providers to enable them to deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners at a local level. The team also acknowledges the level of support provided by MSLETB staff members to second providers. This support has been especially notable during the Covid-19 period.

The review team commends the structured and well documented engagement between MSLETB and employer representatives relating to traineeship and apprenticeships and, notably, in respect of the collaborative development of new apprenticeship programmes in Sales and Craft Butchery.

Recommendations

The review team recommends that MSLETB develop meaningful KPIs in consultation with second providers and use these as the basis for future monitoring and review of service provision by these providers.

The review team recommends that MSLETB strengthen its engagement with employers by formalising the existing engagement activities carried out by its Employer Engagement Team. The proposed CRM system being developed under the SEED project is likely to facilitate this process in the future.

Conclusions

Section 4: Conclusions

4.1 Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

MSLETB inherited provision of FET and associated services in its area from the former VECs and FÁS training centres in 2013 and 2014. It also inherited a wide range of QA policies, systems and standards relating to these services. The organisation has set out to integrate and harmonise these policies, procedures and guidelines across its FET provision. In tandem with its policy integration activities, MSLETB has sought to establish a quality culture throughout the organisation. This process has been facilitated by the personal commitment of the CE and members of the EMT to quality enhancement. In particular, the FET Director has driven adoption of the quality culture within FET services.

In recent years, the integration process has gained momentum and speed arising from the following factors:

1.   Development of the Strategy Statement 2018-2022 included a significant role for integrating QA policies and procedures

2.   The ETB's re-engagement with QQI, which entailed approval of the ETB's QA policies and procedures in 2018.

3.   MSLETB has been developing governance structures related to QA since 2019. These include the Quality Council, which has overall QA responsibility, and subsidiary bodies with defined responsibilities for specific areas including policy development, programme approval, CPD and TEL.

These quality bodies have defined their roles and responsibilities within their respective terms of reference. They have drawn on membership from across the organisation and communicated their roles and functions to staff. They have also adopted a supportive approach rather than one based solely on compliance. These features of the new QA structures have led to their acceptance as valuable sources of information and support among staff members across the ETB. With the onset of Covid-19 restrictions, the various QA bodies were central to adapting MSLETB's service provision to the new conditions.

The review team concludes that the arrangements for governance and management of quality are clear. They are communicated through a range of media and are well understood by staff throughout the organisation. It is striking that although the QA governance structures were only established in 2019, they have become embedded and are well regarded by staff at all levels. The effectiveness of the structures was demonstrated by the organisation's adaptation to Covid-19 restrictions. It was stated repeatedly during the review that MSLETB's prompt and effective response to the pandemic would not have been possible if these structures had not been in place.

It was also clear to the review team that MSLETB has maintained a clear focus on the learner as the centre of its services. This is demonstrated in its continued development of new programmes and services to meet learner needs and in its establishment of QA governance structures to support new and existing services.

4.2 Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

MSLETB has continued to develop its physical facilities for teaching and associated services since its inception. This applies especially to the ETB's major investment in its TEL infrastructure from 2018. Covid-19 had a major impact on the ETB's arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment, as its primary mode of delivery, centre-based teaching, was not possible for an extended period. The successful transition from centre-based learning and assessment to remote provision demonstrates the rigour and adaptability of the organisation's QA systems as well as the effectiveness of its TEL facilities.

MSLETB's emphasis on communication and support for its learners in line with its mission is a major feature of its learning arrangements. It is clear from the review that this level of communication has been maintained and even enhanced through the transition to online delivery, mainly through Microsoft Teams. Similarly, learner representatives confirmed that the ETB's level of formal and informal support to learners has been maintained in the new circumstances. The day-to-day support provided by teachers/tutors/instructors and support staff to learners in very challenging times was a recurring theme during the review. This support included programme delivery, assessment and related services and reflects the organisation's commitment to meeting individual learner needs.

The review team concludes that MSLETB's arrangements for learning and assessment have proven to be effective and responsive to changing conditions.

4.3 Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

MSLETB's arrangements for self-evaluation, monitoring and review have evolved in tandem with its continuing development and integration of its QA systems. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for self-evaluation through its engagement with the inaugural review process and its development of the SER. The layout of the SER, with recommendations recorded under each sub-section, shows that the organisation is willing to identify areas for further development and to define improvement actions.

The recommendations included in this review report generally reflect improvements and developments in systems and processes rather than major changes. In many cases, developments have already been identified by MSLETB itself, demonstrating its capacity for reflective self-analysis.

The review team concludes that MSLETB's current arrangements for self-evaluation, monitoring and review demonstrate integrity and a willingness to identify areas for development and to engage in continuous improvement.

4.4 Commendations

1. The review team commends MSLETB's clear focus on the learner as the centre of its services in line with its mission. This was demonstrated repeatedly through responses from management, staff members, current and past learners and other stakeholders.
2. The review team commends MSLETB on the ongoing transformation in its QA governance structures and in the vital role of QA in the ETB's strategic direction. Progress in this area is demonstrated in the SER and supporting material as well as in responses from members of staff.
3. The review team commends MSLETB's development of new programmes to meet labour market needs in partnership with external stakeholders. The Agriculture, Sales and Butchery Apprenticeship and Eco Driving programmes provide examples of effective collaboration that can inform future developments.
4. The review team commends MSLETB management and staff members on maintaining consistently impressive levels of learner communication and support throughout the transition to online learning and assessment. This includes the formal support structures in place and continuous informal support provided by teachers/tutors/instructors and other staff.
5. The review team commends MSLETB on production of the SER. The organisation has used the self-evaluation process to reflect critically on its QA practices and to engage with staff

throughout the organisation, as well as identifying where developments are required and to improve continually.

6. The review team commends MSLETB in its continued application to enhancing opportunities for participants through developing new programmes and services and through its emphasis on improving the quality of its services.

7. The review team commends the ETB on its continuing efforts to create a single, integrated and harmonised QA system for its FET provision and to embed a "quality culture" throughout the organisation.

8. The review team commends MSLETB on establishing the QA Working Group as a central entity with clearly defined responsibility for developing, storing and disseminating QA policies, procedures and associated documents.

9. The review team commends the ETB on the significant level of awareness of QA policies and procedures among the organisation's staff and on the numerous sources of information on policies and procedures available to staff and their accessibility.

10. The review team commends MSLETB on responding rapidly to the Covid-19 crisis by providing training in TEL to significant numbers of teaching staff. This has enabled the move to online delivery of programmes and assessment of learner achievement.

11. The review team commends the ETB on funding staff members to attend the Maynooth programme on Programme Design and Validation. This supports the organisation' goal to enhance learning opportunities through new programmes.

12. The review team commends MSLETB on its development and implementation of a structured and effective programme application and review process through the PAC.

13. The review team commends MSLETB on providing information on its programmes and services to potential participants through a wide range of media and on continuing to enhance its information provision.

14. The review team commends MSLETB on developing structures and assigning specified staff to facilitate access to programmes for new entrants.

15. The review team commends MSLETB on the linkages it has developed with higher education providers and the formalising of these relationships in MOUs.

16. The review team commends MSLETB on its integration of IV, EA, RAP and Assessment Appeals procedures under the management of the QA Unit and on the quality of assessment-related information provided to staff members.

17. The review team commends MSLETB on the level of staff awareness of requirements and responsibilities related to GDPR. This is evident from staff surveys referenced in the SER and in responses to the review team.

18. The review team commends the variety and quality of MSLETB's communication channels and particularly on its very comprehensive website.

19. The review team commends MSLETB on its continued development of physical and ICT infrastructure to enhance the learner experience. The review team notes that MSLETB's

development of its ICT capacity since 2018 has enabled the ETB to respond rapidly and effectively to the conditions imposed by Covid-19.

20. The review team commends MSLETB on its effective formal and informal communication channels to capture the learner voice, teacher/tutor/instructor feedback and stakeholder input.

21. The review team commends MSLETB on developing and implementing a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidelines to support fair and consistent assessment of learner achievement. It was apparent to the review team that these well understood throughout the organisation.

22. The review team commends MSLETB on its effective response to Covid-19 in devising and implementing alternative assessment methods in consultation with QQI and other certification bodies.

23. The review team commends MSLETB on its continued development of QA monitoring and review processes. Development of the proposed centre-based evaluation system will add a further level of programme monitoring.

24. The review team commends MSLETB on developing contractual arrangements with second providers to enable them to deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of participants at a local level. The team also acknowledge the level of support provided by MSLETB staff members to second providers as reported by their representatives. This support has been especially notable during the Covid-19 period.

25. The review team commends the structured and well documented engagement with employer representatives relating to traineeship and apprenticeship and notably on collaborative development of new apprenticeship programmes in Sales and Craft Butchery.

4.5 Recommendations

1. Efforts to harmonise the ETB's structure, strategy and planning are well underway, especially relating to QA systems and TEL. Other areas are still in an early stage of development. The review team recommends that MSLETB continue the development of integrated QA practices across all services.

2. The review team recommends that MSLETB develop an integrated strategy and action plan for service delivery post-Covid. The strategy should define the future role centre-based, online and blended learning methodologies, taking account of learner needs and circumstances.

3. The review team recommends that MSLETB use experience gained through developing the SER to strengthen further its engagement with stakeholders. This will further enhance its capacity to identify emerging needs and to develop services to address them.

4. In conjunction with the Quality Manual, the review team recommends that the ETB develops and implements a set of indicators for each service to measure the effectiveness of these policies and procedures, in particular their impact on learner achievement and progression.

5. The review team recommends setting up additional Communities of Practice (COPs) to support staff and promote peer learning.

6. The review team recommends that MSLETB complete development of the QA Manual including integrated QA policies and procedures across all services. This should become the primary resource for staff members on all QA requirements.

7. The review team recommends that the ETB continually reviews and develops its QA documentation systems to ensure that QA policies, procedures and associated materials are readily available and accessible to all staff requiring such information.

8. The review team recommends that MSLETB streamline its human resources approaches by defining the skills and knowledge required to realise its strategy and QA objectives and by establishing a training needs analysis system to ensure that access to PD activities is based on identified needs and that PD can be linked with staff progression.

9. The review team recommends development of a systematic programme review process incorporating scheduled review of existing programmes to ensure continued relevance.

10. The review team recommends that MSLETB develop a standard initial assessment system to identify learner needs and the supports required. This system could be developed and piloted in partnership with other providers.

11. The review team recommends that MSLETB take an active role in developing systems for Recognition of Prior Learning in consultation with QQI and other certification bodies.

12. The review team recommends that MSLETB build on existing agreements with higher education providers and continue to develop clearer progression pathways. In doing so, the review team recommends that the ETB further develop its Transition Programme for learners exiting school and progressing to FET programmes.

13. The review team recommends that the work of integrating and harmonising assessment-related policies and procedures across its services and locations be completed and resulting policies and procedures included in the proposed Quality Manual.

14. The review team recommends sharing the insights and recommendations of EA reports across centres to enhance QA-related learning. This would enable heads of centres and teachers/tutors/instructors to benefit from the good practice and areas for improvement identified in other locations and contribute to harmonising practice.

15. The review team recommends the establishment of meaningful KPIs for all services and using the qualitative and quantitative data available to effectively measure and analyse performance.

16. The review team recommends that MSLETB:

17. Continue to review and update its management information systems to streamline data collection and processing across the organisation.

18. Develop an overarching policy and procedures on the collection and use of data as part of a new, harmonised QA system and describe these in the Quality Manual.

19. Explore effective ways of using data to inform FET provision, monitoring and evaluation.

20. The review team recommends that MSLETB carry out its intended review of all linked websites to consider their viability and redesign and appoint a Communications Officer to streamline current communication activities.

21. The review team recommends that a structure be established to integrate assessment methods across programmes and centres, to promote efficiency and uniformity across services. Assessment requirements should be incorporated into the proposed Quality Manual.

22. The review team recommends development of a Learner Support Unit as a "one stop shop" for learners requiring assistance, based on UDL principles. Such a unit would contribute to integrating and streamlining the inputs of existing support services.

23. The review team recommends that MSLETB continues to develop its monitoring and review processes, in the context of its strategic plans and goals.

24. The review team recommends rollout of the proposed centre-based evaluation process, initially on a pilot basis. This process should include a self-evaluation instrument to be completed by each centre manager in consultation with learners and staff. The process should result in a centre QIP, feeding into the organisation QIP.

25. The review team recommends that MSLETB develop meaningful KPIs in consultation with second providers and use these as the basis for future monitoring and review of service provision by these providers.

26. The review team recommends that MSLETB strengthen its engagement with employers by formalising its existing engagement activities carried out by its Employer Engagement Team. The proposed CRM system being developed under the SEED project is likely to facilitate this process in the future.

4.6 Statements on Quality Assurance

The review team finds that MSLETB's quality assurance procedures have continued to evolve and develop as described in this report. They have proven to be effective as demonstrated by:

•   Approval by QQI of MSLETB's QA policies and procedures during the re-engagement process

•   Continuous EA approval of procedures relating to learner assessment

•   The organisation's success in adapting to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19

In developing its QA policies and procedures, MSLETB has had regard to QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines and those statutory QA guidelines relating to apprenticeship and blended learning. The ETB has followed QQI guidelines relating to governance and management of quality in establishing its own governance and management arrangements. The QQI guidelines are not prescriptive and

emphasise the need for providers to own and shape their own QA systems. MSLETB owns its QA development and implementation as evidenced by:

- Commitment of senior management to QA

- Alignment of QA with the organisation's mission and values

- Integration of QA with strategic planning

- Emphasis on developing a quality culture within the organisation

- Establishment of extensive QA governance structures

- Communication of QA developments to staff throughout the organisation

In relation to learners accessing and progressing from programmes, MSLETB demonstrates compliance with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education & Training. The ETB facilitates access to programmes by providing information to prospective learners through a wide range of media. On entering programmes, learners are provided with a range of supports to enable them to participate successfully. MSLETB facilitates progression to higher levels of training within the ETB and has developed formal and informal arrangements with higher education providers to support external progression.

MSLETB continues its efforts to enhance quality and has identified many areas for development in the SER. These include its ongoing commitment to integrating policies and procedures across its services, ongoing work on developing a comprehensive Quality Manual and introducing a centre-based evaluation system. The Self-evaluation Steering Group is being maintained to oversee implementation of the report recommendations. It is clear from the review that MSLETB is committed to the continuation of its quality assurance journey.

Section

5

ETB Review Response

Section 5: ETB Review Response

Response to QQI Inaugural Review Report

MSLETB very much welcomes the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Inaugural Review carried out in May 2021 by the Independent review team, to evaluate the effectiveness of quality assurance processes. The review process itself was balanced and thorough, the review report is representative and comprehensive, and the ETB highly value the additional perspectives, experience and advice facilitated by this review. We welcome the commendations and recommendations in the report and the wholehearted and professional engagement that the Team displayed during its visit and the clear recognition of the professionalism here in MSLETB. We are particularly pleased that the team recognised, for example,

•   Our clear focus on the learner at the centre of all of our services

•   The ongoing transformation of our QA governance and our efforts to embed a quality culture across the organisation

•   Our development of new programmes to meet labour market needs as well as our support of staff to upskill in the area of programme design

•   The continued development of our physical and ICT infrastructure in order to enhance the learner experience

MSLETB is very much committed to a culture of quality and quality enhancement. Through the work of the QA Unit, we are determined to strengthen and further enhance our quality culture by continuing to develop and refine relevant policies and procedures.

Preparation for the review provided the ETB with an opportunity to critically appraise its activities, focusing on an all-encompassing evaluation of quality enhancement undertaken since the formation of the ETB in 2013. This opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of our quality assurance system has come at an opportune and critical time in the ETB's development.

The Inaugural Review has also been timely as we engage in the process of developing a new strategic plan for 2022 and beyond which will have a commitment to respect and to excellence as core values. These are manifest in the quality of our work together as an ETB community. The process of compiling the review report will prove a useful tool for self-reflection in this regard as we plan for the years ahead.

We will use the recommendations outlined by the Review Team to enhance and inform the journey of change and to ensure timely implementation of all recommendations.

MSLETB wish to thank the members of the independent Review Team, especially the Chair and Coordinator, for their deep engagement with the Review process and for their constructive and supportive approach during the review. We congratulate them for their incisive report and for their

very helpful recommendations which will be of great assistance in the years ahead. We also thank Quality and Qualifications Ireland for their guidance and support throughout the review process and for facilitating the smooth transition to virtual review.

Tom Grady

Chief Executive – MSLETB
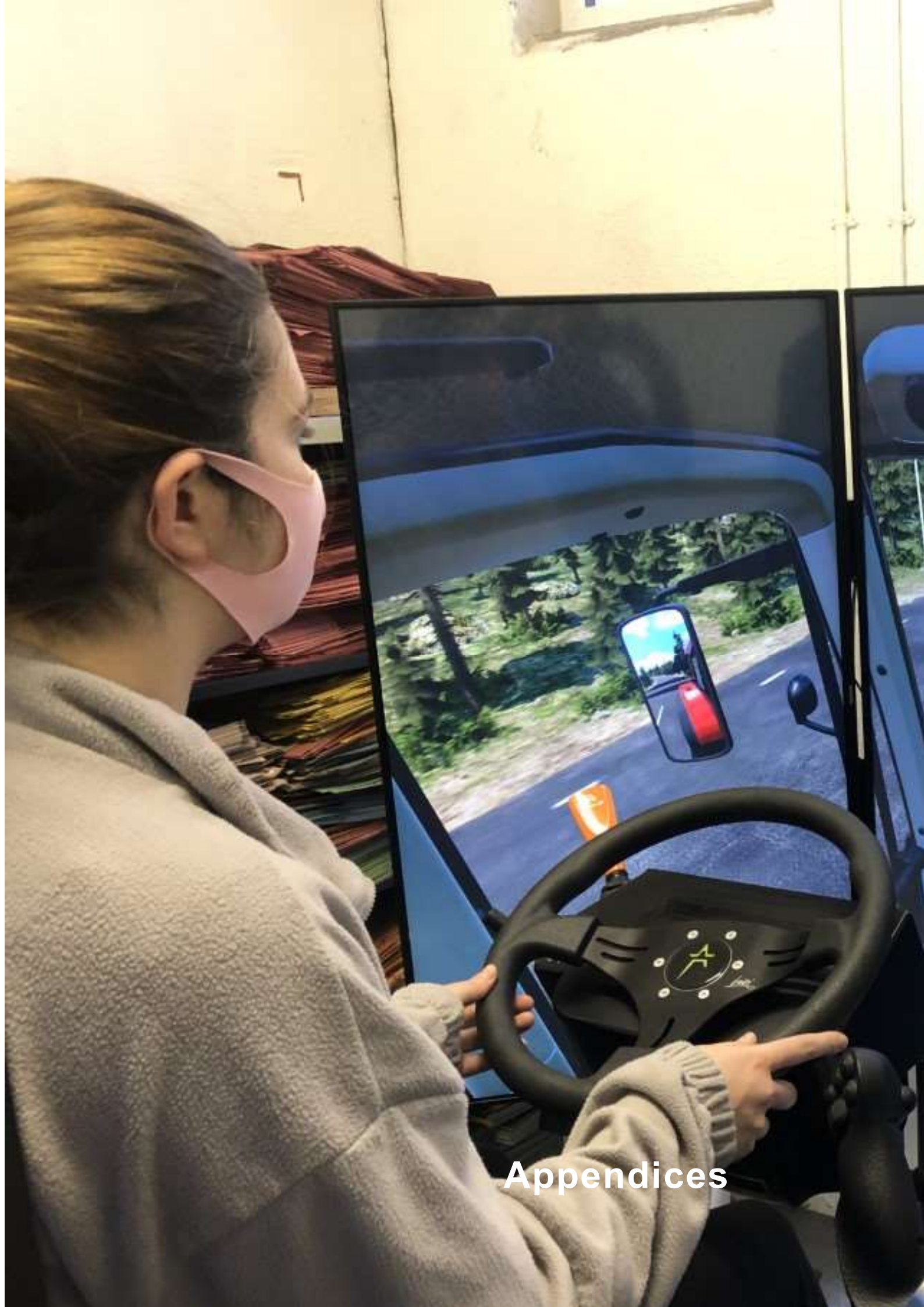
Appendices

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education & Training Boards

1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1.1 QQI established Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in April 2016, and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in May 20171F1. These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

1.1.2 The Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were established under the Education and Training Boards Act (2013). They are statutory providers with responsibility for education and training, youth work and other statutory functions, and operate and manage a range of centres administering and providing adult and further education and training (FET). ETBs also administer secondary and primary education through schools and engage in a range of non-accredited provision. These areas are not subject to quality assurance regulation by QQI.

1.1.3 In 2018, all sixteen ETBs completed re-engagement with QQI. Following this process each ETB established its quality assurance (QA) policy and procedures in accordance with section 30 of the Quality and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI recognises that those policies and procedures are reflective of the evolving and developmental nature of quality assurance within the ETB sector as it continues to integrate the legacy body processes.

1.1.4 As outlined in QQI's Core QA Guidelines, quality and its assurance are the responsibility of the provider, i.e. an ETB, and review and self-evaluation of quality is a fundamental element of an

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ETB's quality assurance system.   A provider's external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review of quality assurance by QQI. QQI review functions are set out in various sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) as amended (henceforth 'the 2012 Act'). The reviews relate to QQI's obligation under Section 27(b) of the 2012 Act (to establish procedures for the review by QQI of the effectiveness and implementation of a provider's quality assurance procedures) and to section 34 of the 2012 Act (the external review by QQI of a provider's quality assurance procedures).

1.1.5   An external review of quality assurance has not been previously undertaken for the ETBs, neither through QQI nor former legacy awarding body processes. QQI is cognisant of the ETBs' current organisational context in which the establishment of comprehensive and integrated quality assurance systems is an ongoing process. A primary function of the reviews will thus be to inform the future development of quality assurance and enhancement activities within the organisations. Following the completion of the sixteen review reports, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying systemic observations and findings.

1.1.6   The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with SOLAS (the state organisation responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring further education and training in Ireland) in carrying out a review of education and training boards. This will take the form of consultation with SOLAS on the Terms of Reference for the review and the provision of contextual briefing by SOLAS to review teams.

2   Purposes

2.1   QQI has specific multi-dimensional purposes for its quality assurance reviews. The Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards outlines six purposes for this review process. Those purposes, and the ways in which they will be achieved and measured, are as follows:

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through
1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs	• Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews. • Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation. phases of the review. • Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them. • Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures. • Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB.

2. To provide feedback to ETBs about organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.	• Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e. how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance. • Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level. • Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards. • Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.
3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.	• Adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent. • Publication of clear timescales and terms of reference for review. • Evaluating, as part of the review, ETB reporting on quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible. • Publication of the individual ETB reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences. • Publication of sectoral findings and observations.
4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.	• Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings. • The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning.
5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.	• Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB. • Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence. • Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context. • Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation
6. To provide an opportunity for ETBs to articulate their stage of development, mission and objectives and demonstrate the quality assurance of their provision, both individually and as a sector.	• Publication of self-evaluation reports, conducted with input from ETB learners and wider stakeholder groups. • Publication of the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences.

3   Objectives and Criteria for Review

3.1   The core objective of the external review is **to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of an ETB's quality assurance procedures**. As this is the inaugural review, it will have a particular emphasis on the arrangements established to date to support the operation of the quality assurance system. Recognising that the development and implementation of an ETB-wide quality assurance system and procedural framework is an ongoing process, the review will also have a forward-looking dimension and will explore the ETB's plans and infrastructure to support the ongoing development of these systems. The review will thus examine the following:

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality:

Evaluate the comprehensive oversight arrangements and transparent decision-making structures for the ETB's education and training and related activities within and across all service provision (for example FE colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers, collaborative partnerships/arrangements).

The governance and quality management systems would be expected to address:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a)   The ETB's mission and strategy

•   How/do the ETB's quality assurance arrangements contribute to the fulfilment of these?

•   Is the learner experience consistent with this mission?

b)   Structures and terms of reference for the governance and management of quality assurance

•   Are the arrangements sufficiently comprehensive and robust to ensure strong governance and management of operations (e.g. separation of responsibilities, externality, stakeholder input)?

•   Is governance visible and transparent?

•   Where multi-level arrangements exist (i.e. where responsibilities are invested in centre managers), is there sufficient clarity, co-ordination, corporate oversight of, and accountability for, these arrangements?

c)   The documentation of quality assurance policy and procedures

•   How effective are the arrangements for the development and approval of policies and procedures?

• Are policies and procedures coherent and comprehensive (do they incorporate all service types and awarding bodies?), robust and fit for purpose?

• Are policies and procedures systematically evaluated?

d)   Staff recruitment, management and development

• How does the ETB assure itself as to the competence of its staff?

• How are professional standards maintained and enhanced?

• How are staff informed of developments impacting the organisation and how can they input to decision-making?

e)   Programme development, approval and submission for validation

• What arrangements are in place to ensure alignment of programme development activity with strategic goals and regional needs?

• Are the arrangements for the approval and management of programme development robust, objective and transparent?

• What arrangements are in place to facilitate and oversee a comprehensive programme development process in advance of submission for validation (e.g. the conduct of research, inclusion of external expertise, writing learning outcomes, curricula etc.)?

• Are there structures in place to support collaborative programme development with other ETBs/providers?

f)   Access, transfer and progression

• How does the ETB quality assure access, transfer and progression systematically across all programmes and services?

• Are there flexible learning pathways, respecting and attending to the diversity of learners?

• Are admissions, progression and recognition policies and processes clear and transparent for learners and implemented on a consistent basis?

g)   Integrity and approval of learner results, including the operation and outcome of internal verification and external authentication processes

• What governance and oversight processes are in place to ensure the integrity of learner assessment and results?

• How does the ETB ensure that these arrangements provide for consistent decision-making and standards across services and centres?

h)   Information and data management;

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that data are reliable and secure?

- How are data utilised as part of the quality assurance system?

- What arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records (including, where relevant, the sharing of learner data with other providers on national apprenticeships)?

- How is compliance with data legislation ensured?

i)   Public information and communications;

- Is information on the quality assurance system, procedures and activities publicly available and regularly updated?

Indicative Matters to be Explored

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that published information in relation to all provision (including by centres) is clear, accurate, up to date and easily accessible?

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Evaluate the arrangements to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB and a high-quality learning experience for all learners. These will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a)   The learning environment

- How/is the quality of the learning experience monitored?

- How/are modes of delivery and pedagogical methods evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?

- How is the quality of the learning experience of learners on work placements ensured?

- Is there evidence of enhancement in teaching and learning?

b)   Assessment of learners

- How is the integrity, consistency and security of assessment instruments, methodologies, procedures and records ensured – including in respect of recognition of prior learning?

- How is the standard of assessment of learners on work placements ensured – particularly where these are undertaken by non-ETB staff?

- Do learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and are they given feedback on assessment?

c)   Supports for learners

•   How are support services planned and monitored to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?

•   How does the ETB ensure consistency in the availability of appropriate supports to learners across different settings/regions?

•   Are learners aware of the existence of supports?

Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Evaluate the arrangements for the monitoring, review and evaluation of, and reporting on, the ETB's education, training and related services (including through third-party arrangements) and the quality assurance system and procedures underpinning them. It will also reflect on how these processes are utilised to complete the quality cycle through the identification and promotion of effective practice and by addressing areas for improvement. This will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a)   Self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including programme and quality review)

•   What are the processes for quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting?

•   Are the processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including the self-evaluation report undertaken for the inaugural review) comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based?

•   Is there evidence of strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of internal quality assurance reviews and monitoring (e.g. review reports, external authenticator reports, learner feedback reports etc.)?

•   How is quality promoted and enhanced?

b)   Programme monitoring and review

•   How are programme delivery and outcomes monitored across multiple centres (including collection of feedback from learners/stakeholders)?

•   Are mechanisms for periodic review of programmes comprehensive, inclusive and robust?

•   Is there evidence that the outcome of programme monitoring and review informs programme modification and enhancement?

•   Are the outputs of programme monitoring and review considered on a strategic basis by the ETB's governance bodies to inform decision-making?

c)   Oversight, monitoring and review of relationships with external/third parties (in particular, with contracted training providers, community training providers, and other collaborative provision).

•   How does the ETB ensure the suitability of the external parties with which it engages?

•   Is the nature of the arrangements with each external party published?

•   Is the effectiveness of these arrangements monitored and reviewed through ETB governance?

•   Does the ETB assess its impact within the region and local communities?

3.2   In respect of each dimension, the review will:

i.   evaluate the effectiveness of ETB's quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of further education, training, and related services; and

ii.   identify perceived gaps in the internal quality assurance mechanisms and the appropriateness, sufficiency, prioritisation and timeliness of planned measures to address them in the context of the ETB's current stage of development; and

iii.   explore achievements and innovations in quality assurance and in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

3.3   Following consideration of the matters above, the review will:

•   Provide a qualitative statement about the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation;

•   Provide a statement about the extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (as listed at 3.4), to include an explicit qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;[2]

•   Provide a qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality; and

•   Identify effective practice and recommendations for further improvement.

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[2] https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf

3.4	The implementation and effectiveness of QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines will be considered in the context of the following criteria:

•	The ETB's mission and objectives for quality assurance;

•	QQI's Sector-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards

•	QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes;

•	QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning;

•	QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;

•	QQI's Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training; and

•	Relevant European guidelines and practice on quality and quality assurance

# 4	The Review Team

4.1	QQI will appoint a review team to conduct the review. Review teams are composed of peer reviewers who are learners; leaders and staff from comparable providers; and external representatives including employer and civic representatives. The size of the team will depend on the size and complexity of the ETB but in general will comprise five or six persons. A reviewer may participate in more than one ETB review.

4.2	QQI will identify an appropriate team of reviewers for each review who are independent of the ETB with the appropriate skills and experience required to perform their tasks. This will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, teaching and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows.[3]:

Chairperson

4.3.	The chairperson is a full member of the team. Their role is to provide tactical leadership and to ensure that the work of the team is conducted in a professional, impartial and fair manner, and in compliance with the Terms of Reference. The chairperson's functions include:

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[3] Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.

- Leading the conduct of the review and ensuring that proceedings remain focused.

- Coordinating the work of reviewers.

- Fostering open and respectful exchanges of opinion and ensuring that the views of all participants are valued and considered.

- Facilitating the emergence of evidence-based team decisions (ideally based on consensus).

- Contributing to, and overseeing the production of, the review report within the timeline agreed with QQI, approving amendments or convening additional meetings if required.

Co-ordinating Reviewer

4.4 The co-ordinating reviewer is a full member of the team. Their role is to capture the team's deliberations and decisions during the proceedings and ensure that they are expressed clearly and accurately in the team report. It is vital that the co-ordinating reviewer ensures that sufficient evidence is provided in the report to support the team's recommendations. The role of the co-ordinating reviewer includes:

- Acting as the liaison between the review team and QQI; and, during the main review visit, between the review team and the ETB review co-ordinator.

- Maintaining records of discussions during the planning and main review visits.

- Co-ordinating the drafting of the review report in consultation with the team members and under the direction of the chairperson within the timeline agreed with QQI.

All Review Team Members

4.5 The role of all review team members includes:

- Preparing for the review by reading and critically evaluating all written material;

- Investigating and testing claims made in the self-evaluation report and other ETB documents during the main review visit by speaking to a range of staff, learners and stakeholders.

- Contributing to the production of the review report, ensuring that their particular perspective and voice (i.e. learner, industry, stakeholder, international etc.) forms an integral part of the review.

- Following the individual ETB reviews, providing observations to inform the development of the sectoral report.

5   The Review Process and Timeline

5.1   The key steps in the review process with indicative timelines are outlined below. Specific dates for each ETB review will be outlined by QQI in accordance with the published review schedule.

Step	Action	Timeframe
Preparation	Preparation of a provider profile by each ETB (e.g. outlining mission; strategic objectives; local context; data on staff profiles; recent developments; key challenges).	6-9 months before first main review visit
	Provision of ETB data by SOLAS (e.g. data on learner profiles; local context; strategic direction).	
	Establishment of review teams and identification of ETBs for review by each review team, selected in accordance with the ETB provider profiles and data and in consultation with ETBs on potential conflicts of interest.	
Self-Evaluation Report (SER)	Preparation and publication by ETBs of individual, inclusive, whole-of-organisation self-evaluations of how effectively they assure the quality of teaching, learning and service activities.	11 weeks before main review visit
Desk Review	Desk review of the self-evaluation reports by the review teams.	Before initial meeting
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training, briefing from SOLAS, discussion of preliminary impressions and identification of any additional documentation required.	5 weeks after submission of self-evaluation report 6 weeks before main review visit
Planning Visit	A visit to the ETB by the chair and co-ordinating reviewer of the review team to receive information about the self-evaluation process, discuss the	5 weeks after SER

Step	Action	Timeframe
	schedule for the main review visit and discuss any additional information requests.	6 weeks before main review visit
Main Review Visit	A visit to the ETB by the review team to receive and consider evidence from ETB staff, learners and stakeholders in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference.	11 weeks following receipt of self-evaluation report
Individual ETB Reports	Preparation of draft ETB review report by review team.	6-8 weeks after main review visit
	Draft report sent to ETB by QQI for a check of factual accuracy.	1 week following receipt by QQI
	ETB responds with any factual accuracy corrections	1 week following receipt
	Final report sent to ETB.	1 week following receipt of any factual accuracy corrections
	Response to review submitted by ETB.	2 weeks after receipt of final report
Outcomes	QQI considers findings of individual ETB review reports and organisational responses through governance processes.	Next available meeting of QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee
	ETB review reports are published with organisational response.	
Follow-Up	Preparation of an action plan by ETB.	1 month after QQI decision
	QQI seeks feedback from ETB on experience of review.	6 weeks after decision

Step	Action	Timeframe
	One-year follow-up report by ETB to QQI. This (and any subsequent follow-up) may be integrated into annual reports to QQI.	1 year after main review visit
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through annual reporting and dialogue processes.	Continuous

Appendix B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Date: 10 May 2021			
Theme: Governance & Management/ Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review (Day 1)			
Time (GMT)	Group	Participants	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director		Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10-10.15	1a. Meeting with CEO	Tom Grady – Chief Executive	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
10.15-11.00	1b. Meeting with CEO and SMT	Tom Grady – Chief Executive	
		Pat Howley - Director of OSD	
		Mary Madden - Director of Schools	
		Peter Egan – FET Director	
		Sean Burke – Area Training Manager	
		Fiona Kieran – Training Centre Manager	
11.00-11.30	Private Review Team Meeting		

11.30-11.45	Review Team Break		
11.45-12.15	2. Self-Evalutation Team	**Self-Evaluation Steering Group:**	Discussion of the development of the self-evaluation report
		Sean Burke - Area Training Manager (Chair SE Steering Group)	
		Fiona Kieran - Training Centre Manager	
		Ann McNamara - Assistant Manager - Ballina Training Centre	
		Trevor Sweetman - Youth Officer	
		Michael Kane - Director of Achill Outdoor Education & Training Centre	
		Anna-Marie Kinsella - Community Education Facilitator - Sligo	
		Laura Britton - FET Administration Coordinator	
12.15-12.45	**Private Review Team Meeting**		
12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.30	Learner Representatives (2 groups)		
			Discussion of mechanisms for learner voice

	3. Parallel Session 1 (Group) - Learner Representatives (Learner Forum/Council)	Kieran O'Donnell – Student Rep, North Connaught College Board of Management	
		Eimhin Killilea – Class Rep, Sales Apprenticeship	
		Jonathan Williams – Class Rep, Sales Apprenticeship	
		Diana Zhurtova – Student Rep, North Connaught College Board of Management	
		Alexander Butler – Student Rep, Westport College of Further Education Board of Management & Nominee for FET Quality Council	
		Bernadette Keenan – Nominee for FET Quality Council & past learner of Sligo College of Further Education	
	4. Parallel Session 2 (Group) - Past MSLETB learners	Fiona Foody -Ballina VTOS - Accounting Technician	Discussion of learner experience and progression opportunities
		Tojo Lazzari - Lough Allen College - Outdoor Sport and Recreation L5	

		Bridget McGrath - BTEI Leitrim - Healthcare Support L5	
		Xue Wen - BTEI Castlebar - Healthcare Support L5	
		Tommy Joe Kilbane - Westport CFE - Agriculture L5	
		Anthony Quigley - Sligo BTEI - Nursing Studies L5	
		Octavian Visan - Drumshanbo VTOS - Business L6	
		Shauna McDermott - Drumshanbo LTI - Hospitality Operations L5	
2.30-3.00	**Private Review Team Meeting**		
3.00-3.15	Review Team Break		
3.15-4.00	Parallel sessions with learners, including learners (max 3 groups)		
	5. Parallel session 1 (L1-4 learners)		Discussion of learner experience

		Thomas Donohue – L4 Information Technology Skills, Leitrim BTEI	
		Naomi Finnegan – L3 Employability Skills, CTC Sligo	
		Alex Gallagher – L4 General Learning, CTC Sligo	
		Laura Doyle – L3 Employability Skills, CTC Leitrim	
		Sean Flanagan – L3 Employability Skills, CTC Leitrim	
		Samah Mougharbel – L3 Maths & ESOL, Adult Literacy Mayo	
		Fiona Quinn – L2 General Learning, Adult Literacy Mayo	
		John Mattimoe - L4 General Learning, STP National Learning Network	
	6. Parallel session 2 (L5-6 learners)		Discussion of learner experience
		Kieran Togher – L5 Tourism with Business, VTOS Belmullet	

		Sethukile Khumalo – L5 Hospitality Operations, LTI Leitrim	
		Lisa Garvin – L6 Healthcare, BTEI Sligo	
		Louise Flanagan – L5 Office Technology, Moyne College	
		Nikolaus Ginter – L5 Traditional Irish Music, VTOS Drumshanbo	
		Nicola Gallagher – L6 Childcare, Sligo College of Further Education	
	7. Parallel session 3 (Apprentices & other WB learners)	Kamil Artemiuk – Electrical Instrumentation Apprentice	Discussion of learner experience
		Dominykas Palsys - Craft Butchery Apprentice	
		Brian Gill – Electrical Apprentice	
		Tara McCrave – Sales Apprentice	
		Eamonn Maloney – Outdoor Pursuits Trainee	
		Declan Flynn – MAMF Apprentice	

		Shannon Regan – Hospitality Operations Trainee	
		Aidan Durkan – Toolmaking Apprentice	
4.00-4.30	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.30-5.15	8. Learner support services staff (e.g. literacy, English language etc.)		Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement of support services to learners
		Pat Sweeney – Support Tutor	
		Clare Sanders – Tutor (Dyslexia)	
		Carol Brehony – Support Tutor	
		Cathy Powell – Adult Education Officer	
		Barbara Roynane – Adult Guidance Counsellor	
5.15-5.45	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: 11 May 2021			
Theme: Governance & Management/ Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review (Day 2)			
Time (GMT)	**Group**	**People**	**Purpose**
09.00-09.30	**ETB Review Coordinator**		**Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator**
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	Second Providers		
10.00-10.45	9a. Second Providers (Parallel Session 1)	Sharon Thornton - Manager, National Learning Network (STP)	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		Joan Donnellan - Contracted Training Manager, KT Business Skills	
		Aisling Kilcullen - Coordinator, Mayo Abbey LTI	
		Sylvia Moriarty - Quality & Training Manager, Compupac IT Solutions	
10.00-10.45	9b. Second Providers (Parallel Session 2)	Margaret Cox - Director, KT Business Skills	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of

		Eamon Smith - Programme Development Officer, National Learning Network (Contracted Training)	education and training delivered by second providers
		Mary O'Hara - Manager, CTC Sligo	
		Feargal O'Donaile - Coordinator, Mohill Computer Training LTI	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15	Parallel sessions with external collaborators (2 groups)		
	10. Parallel Session 1:Employer and regional skills bodies representatives	Hilary McPartland - North West Regional Skills Forum	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		Denise Rocks - West Regional Skills Forum	
		John Hickey - Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland (ACBI)	
		Carol Murphy - SalesSense	
		Olwyn Hughes - The City Bin Co.	

		Peter Davitt - Fastrack into IT (FIT)	
		Declan Thomas - IBEC	
	11. Parallel Session 2: Partner ETBs	Alan O'Gorman - Adult Education Officer, WWETB	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		Anne Higgins - QA Coordinator, GRETB	
		Linda Pinkster - FET Director, CMETB	
		Fiona Sneddon - Training Centre Manager, Cork ETB	
		Eimear Brophy - Further Education & Training Manager, LCETB	
		Mallory Higgins - National Programme Coordinator Commis Chef Apprenticeship, Kerry ETB	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.30	Parallel sessions with external stakeholders (2 groups)		

1.45-2.30	12.Parallel session 1 (Tertiary Education)	Dr. Michael Barrett - Head of Department of Business, IT Sligo	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs, including consideration of ATP
		Dr Breda McTaggart - Head of Department of Social Sciences, IT Sligo	
		Stephen Hannon - Lecturer, GMIT	
		Carmel Brennan - Assistant Registrar for Quality, GMIT	
		Ian Kennedy - Post-Primary Teaching Project Coordinator, St. Angela's College	
		Sinead Dolan - Access Office, St. Angela's College	
1.45-2.30	13. Parallel session 2 (Community Providers & Groups)	Noreen McGarry – Western Care	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups
		Edith Geraghty – Mayo Traveller Support Group	
		Mary Helena O'Toole – Inishturk Club House	
		Fiona Doocey - Comharchumann Forbartha Cill tSeadhna Teo (Geesala Belmullet)	

		Thomas Fitzgerald – Tubbercury Mens Shed	
		David Madden – Sligo Rape Crisis Centre	
		Evelyn Wynne – North Leitrim Women's Centre	
		Maureen Kron – Rossinver Community Centre	
2.30-3.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
	Guidance Counsellors/ Admissions Staff/ Programme Managers		
3.00-3.45	14a. Guidance Counsellors/ Admissions Staff/ Programme Managers (Parallel Session 1)	Michelle Gillen - Course Recruitment Office, Sligo	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression
		Josephine McGread – Adult Guidance Counsellor, Sligo	
		Hugh Ward - Adult Guidance Counsellor, Sligo	
		Saoirse Kennedy - Adult Guidance Information Officer, Sligo	

3.00-3.45	14b. Guidance Counsellors/ Admissions Staff/ Programme Managers (Parallel Session 2)	Kate McKeon – Recruitment Officer, Ballina Training Centre	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression
		Jane Nolan – Adult Guidance Information Officer, Leitrim	
		Erin Gavan - Adult Guidance Counsellor, Mayo	
		Sarah McGeogh - Adult Guidance Counsellor, Mayo	
		Lorraine Staunton - Adult Guidance Information Officer, Mayo	
3.45-4.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.15-4.30	Review Team Break		
4.30-5.15	Parallel sessions with academic staff (cross-section of services and programmes)		
	15. Parallel session 1 (L1-4 Teachers/Instructors/Tutors)	Barry Scanlon - LTI Assistant Coordinator	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Caroline O'Malley - STP Trainer	

		Fiona Quinn Bailey - ESL Teacher	
		Michelle Ruddin - Adult Educator	
		Susan Walsh - Adult Education Tutor	
		Derek Fair - Literacy Tutor	
	16. Parallel session 2 (L5-6 Teachers/Instructors/Tutors)	Cara McGinley - VTOS Teacher	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Dr. Margaret Tallot - VTOS Teacher	
		Fiona Hannon - VTOS Teacher	
		Kendra Conneely - PLC Teacher	
		Bill Flynn - PLC Teacher	
		Naomi Spellman - BTEI Teacher	
		Karen Burke - BTEI Teacher	
		Mary Leydon - PLC Teacher	
	17. Parallel session 3 (Apprenticeship & other WBL instructors)	Martin Brown - Instructor, Butchery Apprenticeship	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Brendan Geraghty - Instructor, Sales Apprenticeship	

		Anthony Leddy - Instructor, Welding Traineeship	
		Kieran Mullarkey - Instructor, Electrical Apprenticeship	
		Marie Morrisson - Instructor, Hairdresssing Traineeship	
		Eric Aldridge - Instructor, Vehicle Body Repairs (VBR) Apprenticeship	
		Jessica Martin - Instructor, Sales Apprenticeship	
5.15-5.45	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: 12 May 2021			
Theme: Programme Development, Monitoring & Review			
Time (GMT)	**Group**	**People**	**Purpose**
09.00-09.30	**ETB Review Coordinator**		**Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator**
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	18. Quality Council (or equivalent)	**FET Quality Council:**	Discussion of the approach to, and mechanisms for, quality assurance and enhancement
		Peter Egan – FET Director	
		Sean Moyles – Training Standards Officer	
		Siobhan Magner – National Coordinator, Sales Apprenticeship	
		Ann McNamara – Assistant Training Manager	
		Ultan Mulvehill – Youthreach Coordinator	

		Pat Howley – Director OSD	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15	19. Programme Approval/Review governance groups/committees	**Programme Approval Committe:**	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of programme development and approval
		Sean Burke – Area Training Manager	
		Fiona Kieran – Training Centre Manager	
		Mary Brodie – Adult Education Officer	
		Damien Melly - Training Standards Officer	
		Donna Sheridan - FET Systems & Strategic Reporting Coordinator	
		Michael Murphy - Principal, Mayo College of Further Education	

12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break		
	Academic staff (cross-section of services and programmes)		
1.45-2.30	20a. Academic staff (cross-section of services and programmes) (Parallel Session 1)	Carol Dolan - Instructor Sligo Training Centre	Discussion of staff involvement in programme development & review
		Karen Munnelly - Instructor Butchery Apprenticeship	
		Cormac Langan - Teacher, Agriculture Programmes, WCFE	
		Mary Greally - Teacher, Agriculture Programmes, WCFE	
1.45-2.30	20b. Academic staff (cross-section of services and programmes) (Parallel Session 2)	Brendan Geraghty - Instructor Sales Apprenticeship	Discussion of staff involvement in programme development & review
		Jessica Martin - Instructor Sales Apprenticeship	
		Deirdre O'Connor - Deputy Principal, North Connaught College	

		Siobhan Magner - Programme Manager, Sales Apprenticeship	
2.30-3.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
3.00-3.15	Review Team Break		
	Quality Office & QA Working Group		
3.30-4.15	21. Quality Office & QA Working Group	**QA Unit:**	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of policy and procedure development and review.
		Fiona Kieran – Training Centre Manager	
		Sean Moyles – Training Standards Officer	
		Claire McCarthy – Training Standards Officer	
		Damien Melly – Training Standards Officer	
		Marcella Fitzpatrick – Assistant Training Standards Officer	
		Orla Ryder – QA Support Officer	

4.15-4.45	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: 13 May 2021			
Theme: Teaching, Learning & Assessment & the Learner Experience			
Time (GMT)	Group	People	Purpose
09.00-09.30	**ETB Review Coordinator**		**Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator**
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	22		Available for any additional/follow-up meetings with ETB participants as determined by review team
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		

11.30-12.15	Parallel sessions with heads of centres		
11.30-12.15	23. Parallel session 1 (Heads of Centres)	Geraldine Tighe – BTEI Coordinator, Sligo	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Gary Burke – Adult Literacy Organiser, Leitrim	
		Cathriona Glancy O'Shea – Youthreach Coordinator, Leitrim	
		James Hardiman – Principal, North Connaught College	
		Emer Mullins – VTOS Coordinator, Swinford	
		Máirtín Ó Móráin – Community Education Facilitator, Mayo	
11.30-12.15	24. Parallel session 2 (Heads of Centres)	Dolores McLoughlin – Adult Literacy Organiser, Sligo	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Kathy Doherty – Youthreach Coordinator, Kiltimagh	
		David McGuinnes - Principal, Sligo College of Futher Education	

		Fearghal O'Boyle – VTOS Coordinator, Sligo	
		Anthony Quinn – Assistant Training Manager, Sligo Training Centre	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.30	Professional & Administrative Staff (OSD)		
1.45-2.30	25. Professional & Administrative Staff (OSD)	Kieran Joyce - Head of HR	Discussion of the role of OSD in supporting quality assurance, enhancement and the learning experience
		Sinead McNicholas - Recruitment Manager	
		Martina Doyle - Corporate Services	
		Mary McDonald - Head of Corporate Services (Acting)	
		John McGoey - Head of Finance	
		Therese Toolin - Administration Officer, Finance	

		Seamus Maloney - ICT Regional Coordinator	
2.30-3.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
3.00-3.15	Review Team Break		
3.15-4.00	26. ETB Employer Engagement	Geraldine O'Haire – Employer Engagement Officer	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local skills needs and quality assuring provision
		Aidan Tighe – Employer Engagement Officer	
		Pauric McWeeney – Senior Training Advisor	
		Linda Lally – Senior Training Advisor	
		Caroline Carthy – Senior Training Advisor	
		Conor Clarke - Assistant Training Manager (Programme Manager SEED)	
4.00-4.30	Private Review Team Meeting		

4.30-5.15	Parallel sessions with advisory groups		
4.30-5.15	27.Parallel session 1 (TEL Advisory Group)	**TEL Advisory Group:**	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of technology enhanced learning.
		Edel Gavan – TEL Coordinator	
		Sean Bailey – VTOS Coordinator	
		Beatrice Brophy – VTOS Coordinator	
		Sinead Wall – Teacher	
		Simon Cosgrove – Assistant Training Manager	
		Lorraine Devaney – Instructor	
4.30-5.15	Parallel Session 2 (PD Advisory Group)	**PD Advisory Group:**	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of professional development.
		David Crowley - PD Coordinator	
		Cormac Hanlon – Adult Education Officer	
		Mary Brodie – Adult Education Officer	

		Patricia Kerrigan – Administrative Officer, Human Resources	
		Claire McCarthy – Training Standards Officer	
5.15-5.45	Optional Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: 14 May 2021			
Theme: **Wrap-up**			
Time (GMT)	**Group**	**People**	**Purpose**
09.00-09.30	**Free Session**		
9.30-10.45	Private Review Team Meeting	QQI representatives will join at 10:30 for 15 mins	
10.00-10.45	28. Optional		Available for any additional/follow-up meetings with ETB participants as determined by review team. If not required, used by review team to discuss initial findings
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.00-11.30	QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director	QQI representatives ETB Coordinator FET Director	QQI gathers feedback on the review process
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		

11.30-12.15	29. Optional		Available for any additional/follow-up meetings with ETB participants as determined by review team. If not required, used by review team to discuss initial findings
12.15-12.45	30. ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation Steering Group, Group of Learners		Oral feedback on initial review findings
12.45-1.45	LUNCH		
1:45-5.00	Optional: Private Review Team Meeting		Review team discuss initial findings and prepare oral feedback

Glossary of Terms

QQI glossary of terms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition/Explanation
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AHEAD	Association for Higher Education, Access & Disability
AIS	Assessment Instrument Specifications
AONTAS	The National Adult Learning Organisation
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
CE	Chief Executive
CIBTEC	Confederation of International Beauty Therapy & Cosmetology
CIDESCO	A Qualification body for Aesthetics and Beauty Therapy
COP	Communities of Practice
Core/CORE	•
•	MSLETB's CORE Payroll System
CPD	Continuing / continuous professional development
CRM	Client Relationship Management
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CTC	Community Training Centre
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EA	External Authentication / External Authenticator
EMT	Executive Management Team
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET)
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETB	Education and Training Board

FET	Further Education and Training
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HE	Higher Education
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology